

Section 8 Unintentional Circumstances

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CONTEXT OF INJURY

Hunting: Hunt

Target shooting: Miss

Self-defensive shooting: SelfDef

Celebratory firing: Celeb

Loading/unloading gun: LoadGun

Cleaning gun: Clean

Showing gun to others: Show

Playing with gun: Play

Other context of injury: OthAcc

Name	Definition
Hunt	Occurred while hunting or on a hunting trip
Miss	Occurred while target shooting
SelfDef	Self-injury occurred while defending against a suspected aggressor
Celeb	Occurred while firing celebratory shots
LoadGun	Occurred while loading or unloading a gun
Clean	Occurred while cleaning a gun
Show	Occurred while showing a gun to others
Play	Occurred while playing or “fooling around” with a gun
OthAcc	Occurred within a context other than the above categories

Uses

These variables identify the contexts within which an unintentional shooting occurs. It can be used to identify trends in subtypes of unintentional shootings over time and will aid in planning and evaluating prevention programs targeted at improving gun design, reducing child access to guns, teaching gun safety, and other strategies.

Discussion

Hunting – Code “Hunt” as “yes” if an unintentional firearm injury occurred while the shooter or victim was hunting or on a hunting trip. Include any incident that occurs after leaving home and before returning home from hunting. The shooting itself need not have been during an active hunt to be considered hunting-related. For example, a hunter who has finished hunting and accidentally shoots himself while loading his rifle in the truck for the return trip home is considered a hunting accident. If an injury occurs before or after the hunting trip (e.g., while cleaning a gun in preparation for a hunting trip), the incident should not be coded as hunting-related.

Target Shooting – Code “Miss” as “yes” if the shooter is aiming for a target and unintentionally hits a person. Target shooting can occur either in the setting of a formal shooting range or in an informal “backyard” setting (e.g., teenagers shooting at signposts on a fence).

Self-Defense – Code “SelfDef” as “yes” when a victim is attempting to defend him or herself with a gun and inadvertently shoots themselves. Endorse “SelfDef” only if the shooting was self-inflicted. Shootings of one person by another that occur during a self-defensive shooting (e.g., when a store clerk unintentionally shoots a customer while aiming for a robber) should be coded as “homicide” for Type of Death.

Celebratory – Code “Celeb” as “yes” when the shooter was firing the gun upward in a celebratory manner with no intention of threatening or endangering others (e.g., revelers on New Year’s Eve shooting their guns in the air at midnight). Firing warning shots in the air (for example to break up a fight) should not be coded as celebratory if the shot unintentionally strikes a bystander, but should be coded as homicide for Type of Death (since the gun was used in a threatening manner to control others).

Loading/unloading – Code “LoadGun” as “yes” if the firearm discharges while the shooter is loading or unloading ammunition from the gun.

Cleaning – Code “Clean” as “yes” if the shooter pulls the trigger or the gun discharges while a person is cleaning the gun.

Showing – Code “Show” as “yes” if the shooter was showing the gun to another person when the gun discharged or the trigger was pulled. An example is a teenager who was showing his father’s new gun to his friend.

Playing – Code “Play” as “yes” if the shooter and one or more others are playing with a gun. Other phrases that would trigger coding this context include “horsing around” and “fooling around.” This variable is not limited to children. A case example would be two teenaged brothers playing a game of quick draw with their father’s revolvers. They are unaware that one of the guns has a bullet in the cylinder.

Other – Code “OthAcc” as “yes” if the shooting occurs during some context other than those described by the existing codes.

Name	Label	Table	Type	Field length	Priority	Primacy
Hunt	Hunting:	Person	Checkbox	1	LR/LR	CME/PR
Miss	Target shooting:	Person	Checkbox	1	LR/LR	CME/PR
SelfDef	Self-defensive shooting:	Person	Checkbox	1	LR/LR	CME/PR
Celeb	Celebratory firing:	Person	Checkbox	1	LR/LR	CME/PR
LoadGun	Loading/ unloading gun:	Person	Checkbox	1	LR/LR	CME/PR
Clean	Cleaning gun:	Person	Checkbox	1	LR/LR	CME/PR
Show	Showing gun to others:	Person	Checkbox	1	LR/LR	CME/PR
Play	Playing with gun:	Person	Checkbox	1	LR/LR	CME/PR
OthAcc	Other context of injury:	Person	Checkbox	1	LR/LR	CME/PR

Response Options:

Hunt through OthAcc

0 No, Not Collected, Not Available, Unknown

1 Yes

Data Standards or Guidelines

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MECHANISM OF INJURY

Thought safety was engaged: Safety
Thought unloaded, magazine disengaged: UnlMg
Thought gun was unloaded, other: Unloa
Unintentionally pulled trigger: Pull
Bullet ricochet: Richo
Gun defect or malfunction: Defct
Fired while holstering/unholstering: Holst
Dropped gun: DropGun
Fired while operating safety/lock: Engag
Gun mistaken for toy: Toy
Other mechanism of injury: FOth

Name	Definition
Safety	Shooter thought the gun was inoperable because the safety was engaged
UnlMg	Shooter thought the gun was unloaded because the magazine was disengaged
Unloa	Shooter thought the gun was unloaded (other or unspecified reason)
Pull	Shooter unintentionally pulled the trigger
Richo	The bullet ricocheted and unintentionally struck the victim
Defct	The gun had a defect or malfunctioned
Holst	Shooter unintentionally fired the gun while holstering or unholstering the gun or removing it from or replacing it in his or her clothing
DropGun	The gun discharged when it was dropped
Engag	Shooter unintentionally fired the gun while operating the safety lock
Toy	The gun was mistaken for a toy
FOth	Other mechanism of injury

Uses

The variables identify the specific mechanism by which the gun was fired and hit another person unintentionally. They can be used to identify trends in subtypes of unintentional shootings over time and will aid in planning and evaluating prevention programs targeted at improving gun design, reducing child access to guns, teaching gun safety, and other strategies.

Discussion

Safety – Code “Safety” as “yes” if the shooter thought the safety was on and the firearm would not discharge.

Magazine disengaged – Code “UnlMg” as “yes” if the shooter believed the gun was unloaded because the magazine was disengaged. This circumstance would not apply to revolvers, derringers, or certain long guns that do not use a magazine. Frequently when the magazine is removed from a semi-automatic pistol, the gun handler believes it is unloaded when in fact a cartridge may remain in the firing chamber.

Unloaded – Code “Unloa” as “yes” if the shooter thought the gun was unloaded for a reason other than the magazine was disengaged or for an unspecified reason. Examples are a child who had previously played with the gun when it was unloaded and assumed it still was, or a sports shooter who always left his gun unloaded was unaware that his son had borrowed it and left it loaded.

Pulled trigger – Code “Pull” as “yes” if a person unintentionally pulled the trigger, for example while grabbing for a falling gun or while reaching for the gun or holding it too tightly with the finger on the pull.

Ricochet – Code “Richo” as “yes” if a bullet ricocheted off course from its intended target and struck the victim.

Defect – Code “Defct” as “yes” if the shooting resulted from a gun defect or malfunction. Because it is difficult for a non-expert to judge whether a shooting resulted from operator error vs. a true defect or malfunction, this code should be based on a finding by a trained firearm and toolmark examiner.

Holstering – Code “Holst” as “yes” if the gun is being placed in or removed from its holster or clothing (e.g., the gun fires when a victim is pulling it from the waistband of his pants).

Dropped – Code “DropGun” as “yes” if the gun accidentally discharges when it is dropped or when something is dropped on it. This code applies to situations in which the impact of the crash causes the gun to discharge. It does not apply to situations in which a gun starts to fall and is fired when the handler grabs for it and unintentionally pulls the trigger. That situation should be coded as Pull.

Engaging lock – Code “Engag” as “yes” if the shooting occurred while the gun handler was attempting to open or close the lock and unintentionally fired the gun (e.g., while attempting to pull the cable lock free of the trigger, the victim unintentionally pulled the trigger) This variable will be important in detecting any unintended injuries that result from using safety equipment.

Mistaken for toy – Code “Toy” as “yes” if a person (usually a child) thought the gun was a toy and was firing it without understanding the danger. This code applies to the shooter’s understanding of the gun that he or she was handling. It does not apply to situations in which a person kills another person because they thought the victim was aiming a gun (in reality, a toy) at them. These situations would be coded as homicides.

Other – Code “FOth” as “yes” if the shooting occurred as the result of a mechanism not already described by one of the existing codes.

Name	Label	Table	Type	Field length	Priority	Primacy
Safety	Thought safety was engaged:	Person	Checkbox	1	LR/LR	CME/PR
UnlMg	Thought unloaded, magazine disengaged:	Person	Checkbox	1	LR/LR	CME/PR
Unloa	Thought gun was unloaded, other:	Person	Checkbox	1	LR/LR	CME/PR
Pull	Unintentionally pulled trigger:	Person	Checkbox	1	O/O	CME/PR
Richo	Bullet ricochet:	Person	Checkbox	1	O/O	CME/PR
Defct	Gun defect or malfunction:	Person	Checkbox	1	LR/LR	CME/PR
Holst	Fired while holstering or unholstering:	Person	Checkbox	1	LR/LR	CME/PR
DropGun	Dropped gun:	Person	Checkbox	1	LR/LR	CME/PR
Engag	Fired while operating safety/lock:	Person	Checkbox	1	LR/LR	CME/PR
Toy	Gun mistaken for toy:	Person	Checkbox	1	LR/LR	CME/PR
FOth	Other mechanism of injury:	Person	Checkbox	1	O/O	CME/PR

Response Options:

Safety through FOth

- 0 No, Not Collected, Not Available, Unknown
- 1 Yes

Data Standards or Guidelines

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